

A  
L E T T E R

FROM

XO HO, a *Chinese* Philosopher at LONDON,

TO HIS FRIEND

LIEN CHI at PEKING.

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THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY

OF LONDON

FROM THE YEAR 1660

TO THE PRESENT TIME



BY

HORACE WALPOLE, EARL OF ORFORD.

(LONDON: 1741.)

By Horace Walpole, earl of Orford.



A

# LETTER, &c.

**I** HAVE told thee, this People are incomprehensible ; not only they differ from us ; they are unlike the rest of the Western World ; a *Frenchman* has Prejudices, has Caprices ; but they are the Prejudices of his Nation, they are the Caprices of his Age. A *Frenchman* has settled Ideas, though built on false Foundations ; an *Englishman* has no fixed Ideas : His Prejudices are not of his Country, but against some particular Parts or Maxims of his Country ; his Caprices are his own ; they are the essential Proofs of his Liberty. In *France* they have a high Notion of their King ; they will stab him, but they will not hate him. An *Englishman* loves or hates his King once or twice in a Winter, and that for no Reason, but because he loves or hates the Ministry in being. They do not oppose their King from Dislike of Royal Power, but to avail themselves of his Power ; they try to level it till they can mount upon it. They are as little in Earnest about Liberty. To have the Nation free ! Nobody means it. To have the Country enslaved ; they desire it not : Were there Vassals, they would be the Vassals of the Crown, or of the Nobles ; while all are free to sell their Liberty, the richest or craftiest may purchase it.

I have said, that they have no general Ideas ; they have not ; but they have general Names. Formerly they had ~~two~~ Parties ; now they have three Factions, and each of those Factions has something of the Name, or something of the Principles of each of those Parties. In my last I told thee, that the second Faction in Magnitude had displaced the least Faction, and that a new Ministry would immediately be appointed. I deceived thee ; I was deceived. I did not believe so because I was told so : Here one is told something every day ; the People demand to be told something, ~~no Matter what~~ : If a Politician, a Minister, a Member of their Assembly was mysterious and refused to impart something to an Enquirer, he would make an Enemy : If he tells a Lie, it is no Offence ; he is communicative ; that is sufficient to a free People : All they ask is News ; a Falshood is as much News as Truth. Why I believed a Ministry would soon be named, was ; I thought that in a Country where the whole real Business of their General Assembly was to chuse Ministers, they could never be without : I was deceived. I thought that when a Prince dismissed one Minister, he would take another : I was deceived. I thought when a Nation was engaged in a great War with a superior Power, that they must have Council ; I was deceived : Reason in *China* is not Reason in *England*. An Officer of the Treasury may be displaced, and a Judge can execute his Office. Their High-Priest died lately ; I waited to see from what Profession, which had nothing to do with Religion, his Successor would be chosen.

When a Day or two had passed, I asked when a new Ministry would be named ; I heard several ask the same Question. I was told, when *the Enquiries were over*. I found this satisfied every Body but me. I asked what *the Enquiries* were. By the scanty Knowledge I have of their Language, I concluded it signified, an Enquiry who was fit to be Minister—No such Thing—They never enquire beforehand.



forehand. Sometimes, as in the present Case, they enquire whether a former Minister had been fit to be so. Know, that last Year the *English* lost a valuable Island: The People were enraged; they blamed the Admiral who commanded their Fleet; the Admiral who directed their Fleet; their chief Judge, their chief Treasurer, their chief Secretary. The first Admiral was imprisoned; the rest quarrelled and gave up their Employments. The chief Man of the little Faction was made Minister, and his Friends got Places; yet the Friends of the other two Factions retained theirs. An Enquiry or Trial of the late Ministers was determined: The imprisoned Admiral was tried, acquitted, condemned and put to Death. The Trials of the others were delayed. At last they were tried—Not as I expected, whether they were guilty, but whether they should be Ministers again or not. If the executed Admiral had lived, he too might be a Minister. Just as this Trial began, the new Head of the Admiralty forgot to make a Bow to the King—Upon which he and all his Friends were displaced. I understood this: As the *English* are more free than we are, I conceived that this was a Punishment proportioned to their Ideas of offended Majesty, and reflected how severely one of our Countrymen would be dealt with, who should affront the Dignity of our August Emperor. I was again deceived; this Mandarin is likely to be again a Minister. As his Friends have great Weight in the General Assembly where the Trials are held, I concluded they would persecute their Antagonists, and I deplored the Fate of those unhappy Men who would be at the Mercy of their bitterest Enemies. There is no Rule for judging of this People. The third Faction who were in the Nature of Judges, would only try Facts and not Persons; and even if they could have punished Facts, they showed they were not unmerciful. I do not understand this Nation.

What will surprize thee more, the chief Men of the Capital have bestowed high Honours on the third Faction for  
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being dismissed from the Government : And the Honours they have bestowed are a Permission to exercise a Trade, which the Persons so distinguished would think exceedingly beneath them to follow. Dost thou comprehend this ? But the Enquiries are finished—Thou wilt ask me, how ! I know not—Only I have been told that the General Assembly affirmed that certain Things, which all the Land knew before, did or did not happen. Thou wilt attribute this ridiculous Account to my Ignorance of the Language or Manners of the Country ; in Truth I am not Master of either ; but I know the Language of the *French* ; these very Relations that I send thee, are translated into *French*, and the *English* scruple not to send them all over *Europe*, where the *French* Language is understood.

Now thou wilt say, my Friend *Xo Ho*, leave these Things which thou dost not understand, or canst not explain ; and pass on to Facts : Tell me, thou wilt say, now the Trials are finished, who are the new Ministers ? From which Faction are they chosen ?—By *Cong-fou-tsee* \*, thou wilt believe as little what I shall tell thee, as what I have already delivered. Their King, who dismissed a whole Ministry, because one of them did not humble himself enough before the Throne, is gone into the Country, without knowing who are to be his Ministers—How ! how ! Thou wilt cry ; their Monarch left his Capital, without appointing a Ministry ! For what is he gone into the Country ? To visit his Provinces ? To distribute Justice ? To muster his Army ?—Alas ! alas ! dear *Lien Chi* ; *England* is not *China*—Hear, and I will tell thee briefly. The *English* have no Sun, no Summer as we have, at least their Sun does not scorch like ours. They content themselves with Names : At a certain Time of the Year they leave their Capital, and that makes Summer ; they go out of the City, and that makes the Country. Their Monarch, when he goes into the Country, passes in his Calash by a Row of high Trees, goes along a Gravel Walk, crosses one of the chief Streets,

\* *Confucius*.



Streets, is driven by the Side of a Canal between two Rows of Lamps, at the End of which he has a small House, and then he is supposed to be in the Country. I saw this Ceremony Yesterday ; as soon as he was gone, the Men put on under Vestments of white Linnen, and the Women left off those vast Draperies, which they call *Hoops*, and which I have described to thee ; and then all the Men and all the Women said it was hot. If thou wilt believe me, I am now writing to thee before a Fire.

At the Top of the Gravel Walk, as their King passed, was a large Company of Youths and Boys, newly clad as Mariners, who are cloathed by private Contributions ; for private Persons are rich, the Public is poor ; and nothing is well done, but by these Starts and Devices. The King has given a thousand Pieces of Gold to this Institution, not as King, but in his private Capacity, which here they distinguish. If he had given them a thousand Pieces of his public Money, not one half would have come to the Youths, but would have been embezzled by the Officers of the Revenue. These Youths were commanded by no Officer in the Sea-Service, but by the only civil Magistrate they have ; and he is totally blind. He commands their Charities, instead of being the Object of them. Every Thing here is reversed.

Thou wilt be impatient to hear why the King has appointed no Ministry ; if I may believe a Man who has always hitherto told me Truth, the King has no more to do with the Choice of his Ministry, than thou with that of our serene Emperor. Thou wilt reply ; but can the King of *England* unmake his Ministers, and not make them ? Truly I know not how that is. He has left the Town, and when a Ministry is formed, he is to be made acquainted with it. The three Factions are dealing with each other to come to some Agreement, and to whatever they agree, the King must. Thou wilt say ; then he is no King.

King. I answer; not according to thy Ideas: The *English* think differently. Well! wilt thou say; but in thy other Letters thou hast described the People of *England* as not so easily satisfied: Will they suffer three Factions of different Merits and Principles to lord it over both King and People? Will those who value royal Authority, not regret the Annihilation of it? Will those who think the ancient Ministers guilty, not be offended, if they are again employed? Will those who rewarded the least Faction for being dismissed, not resent their uniting with those who contributed to their Expulsion? My Friend *Lien Chi*, I tell thee Things as they are; I pretend not to account for the Conduct of *Englishmen*; I told thee before, they are incomprehensible. It is but lately that a Man entered into the King's Service, and vacated his Seat in the General Assembly by it: The King punished him for it, and would not let him be re-admitted into the General Assembly---yet the Man who bowed not to the King may be rewarded for it. Farewell.

F I N I S.